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Love Is for Giving

(Note: This article is translated into Spanish [here](#), [Polish here](#), and [French here](#). This article is an excerpt from Nirmala's satsang book, *Living from the Heart*, available as a **free ebook** [here](#).)

What is love and where is it found? We search for love and try to get love, and yet it seems like we never get enough. Even when we've found it, it can slip away as time passes. What if there is a source of love that never fades and is always available? What if love is as near and easy as breathing? What if you have been "looking for love in all the wrong places" instead of actually lacking love?

Love is both simpler and more mysterious and subtle than we imagine it to be. Love is simply the spacious, open attention of our awareness, which is the gentlest, kindest, and most intimate force in the world. It touches things without impinging on them. It holds all of our experience but doesn't hold it down or hold it back. And yet, inherent in awareness is a pull to connect and even merge with the object of your awareness.

It's this seemingly contradictory nature of awareness—the completely open and allowing nature of it and its passionate pull to blend with and even become the object of its attention—that gives life its depth and sweetness. There is nothing more satisfying than this delicious dilemma of being both apart from and, at the same time, connected to something you see, hear, or feel.

Awareness is the beginning of all separation. Prior to awareness, there is just oneness or "is-ness," with nothing separate from the oneness that would be able to experience it. With the birth of awareness comes the subtle distinction of two things: that which is aware and the object of awareness. And yet, those two are connected by this mysterious force we are calling awareness, or love.

This flow of awareness and love that connects you to all you experience is the true source of satisfaction and joy. We have all experienced it to some degree. Whenever you fall in love with a person, pet, piece of music, beautiful object, or anything else, you have felt this flow of intimate, connected awareness. Unfortunately, we've been taught to believe that the source of this good feeling was the object of our affection. So we suffered whenever we lost our apparent source. When your lover leaves, your beloved pet dies, the concert ends, or your dream home is repossessed, you feel bereft of that loving, connected feeling.

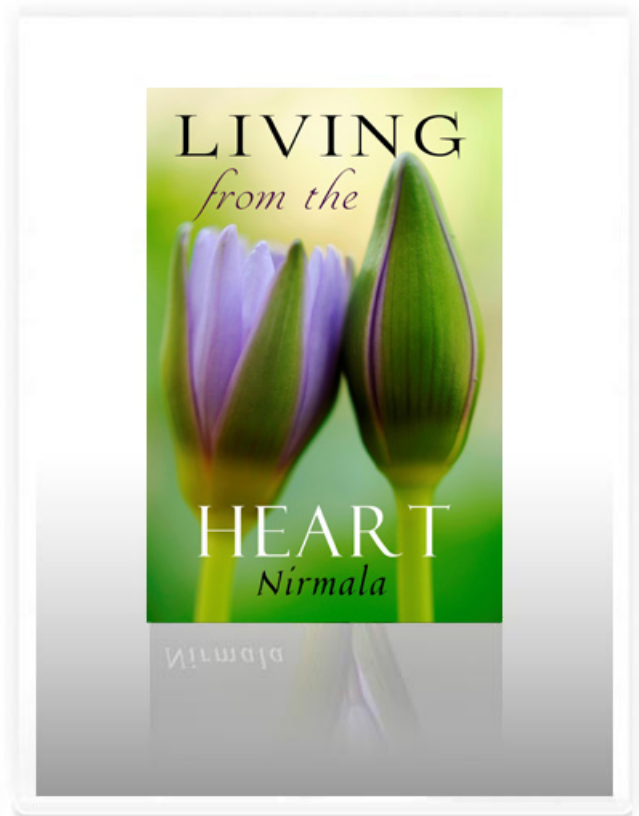
YOU ARE THE SOURCE

But what if you are the source of the awareness that connects you to everything? What if the love you have been seeking has always been right here inside your own Heart? What if it doesn't matter what your awareness touches, but only that awareness is flowing? That would profoundly simplify the search for love. Anything or any experience would be a suitable object for your love.

The sweetness of love is in the flow of awareness itself. The completely allowing openness and freedom you might look for from a perfect lover is already here in your own awareness. It doesn't have to try to be accepting because awareness is, by nature, open and allowing. By itself, awareness can't do anything but touch. It can't push or pull or demand something from or limit the freedom of what it touches. And yet, it is not an aloof, distant observer. It is deeply and intimately connected to the object of awareness. In fact, awareness and the object of awareness come from the same source and are ultimately the same thing.

This connection and intimacy that is natural in awareness is satisfying and fulfilling regardless of the object of awareness. In other words, whatever you are experiencing right now is your true love. Whatever you are experiencing is an opportunity to also experience the depth of your true nature as open, loving awareness. Your true nature is true love. It is the perfect lover you have been seeking, and not only is it always here, but it is who you really are.

You might be thinking, "But wait, I don't feel like I'm in love or loving all the time. Sometimes I feel lonely or angry and cut off from love



and satisfaction." So how can it be that love is here, but you don't feel it? Is love really absent in those moments, or is it just limited in its expression and flow? Are there really moments when there is no awareness? Or is there always some awareness, even if it isn't a lot? If there were no awareness, there also would be no problems because awareness is the beginning of separation (the sense of a separate self), and the end of awareness is the end of separation. Practically speaking, without awareness, there can't be loneliness, anger, or anything else. So when you are lonely or angry, there is at least some awareness, although possibly not much.

Even when awareness is contracted and tight, as it often is when you are lonely, angry, sad, hurt, or afraid, it has the same nature as when you are happy and excited. Even a single drop of water is still wet, and even a single drop of awareness is still open and allowing of whatever it is touching.

The only trick to experiencing the open and allowing nature of awareness is to look for it in the actual experience you are having. When your awareness is contracted by judgment or fear, it's not actually touching the object of your judgment or fear. Instead, it is touching the judgmental or fearful thought you are having. Awareness is completely allowing and open to that thought. That is the definition of awareness: it is the open and allowing recognition of the content of our experience. If awareness is not open to something, then we are not aware of it.

The key to experiencing love is to notice where awareness is flowing right now. That flow of awareness is love, and it's the most satisfying and nourishing thing you can experience. There is naturally a direction to this flow of awareness. It moves from within your being to the objects nearby and the experiences you are having. You can only fully experience this flow of aware love as it moves in that direction.

When someone else is lovingly aware of you (not of their judgments or desires regarding you, but simply of you as you are), you can experience the outer expression of their love. You can see the way they are looking at you, the smile on their face, and their reactions to you. But the awareness of you is arising in them. The love is flowing from them toward you, and so it is filling them with a sense of satisfaction and joy. If you also are to feel satisfaction and joy, it will depend on whether you are experiencing a flow of love toward them. It is your own open awareness that fills you with that sense of connection and appreciation. *You are filled with love when you are giving it to someone or something else.*

Obviously, it's easier to open your Heart and express love when the requirements of your conditioning are being met. When someone who matches your ideal for a lover is attracted to and interested in you, it's especially easy to give him or her the same openness and attention in return. So naturally, when two people are falling in love, they are both feeling the fullness and richness of the free flow of awareness, or love. But the contact each of them has with that love is within themselves. It's their own love and awareness that is filling them up so richly.

This truth-that you are filled with love when you love, rather than when you are loved-can free you from the search for love outside yourself. If you still aren't sure that it is your own love that fills you, think of a time when someone was in love with you, but you weren't in love with him or her. The flow of loving attention toward you wasn't satisfying. In fact, it might have been uncomfortable having someone so interested in you when you weren't feeling the same way.

In contrast, when you are falling in love with someone, it can be rich, exciting, and energizing, even if it isn't reciprocated. In unrequited love, there is an intensity and beauty from the outward flow of love that is filling you in that moment. So despite the disappointment and hurt of not being loved back, you experience a fullness and aliveness as a result of loving the other. In the Renaissance, unrequited love was even seen as an ideal. It's the love flowing out from your own Heart that fills you with joy and satisfaction. The source is within you.

JUST ONE BEING

There is just one awareness and one Being behind all the individual awarenesses. The way you can reach that oneness of Being is by experiencing the flow of love from within your being. Paradoxically, the place where you are connected to others is inside your own Heart. You can't really connect to another externally. Even if you used super glue to attach yourself to another person, there would still be a sense of separation in your outer experience, not to mention how hard it might be to disconnect!

On the inside, you are already connected to everyone and everything. The connection is this flow of awareness that is here right now reading these words. It is in the loving nature of awareness that the sense of connection is found, not in the objects of awareness. You are connected to others in the awareness flowing from within you to them. Connection is not found in the flow of awareness and love toward you, as that flow is connected to its source inside the other person.

This is good news! You can experience limitless love no matter what anyone else is doing. The only thing that matters is how much you are loving, not how much you are loved. Right now, you can be filled to overflowing with the incredible sweetness of love, just by giving awareness to anything and everything that is present in your experience. Don't take my word for it; test it out with this exercise:

Exercise: *Allow your awareness to settle on a physical object nearby. Take an extra moment to allow your awareness to fully touch the object. Just for the sake of this experiment, give as much love, appreciation, and acceptance as you can to that object. Then notice another object. As your awareness rests for a moment on that, give it as much love, appreciation, and acceptance as you can.*

Now allow your awareness to notice a sound in your environment. As you listen, give that same loving appreciation to the sound you are hearing.

If you have any difficulty giving love and appreciation to a particular object or sound, try another object or sound. If you pick a more neutral object or sound, it will be easier at first to experience loving something for no particular reason.

Continue allowing your awareness to land on various objects, sounds, colors, tastes, smells, and sensations. With each one, allow as much love and appreciation to flow toward it as you can. Take as long as you like with each experience, and if it's difficult to feel love toward something, just move on. It will get easier to love for no reason as you repeat this exercise.

Now notice other things that may be arising within you: an uncomfortable sensation, a thought, a feeling, or a desire. Take an extra

moment to send loving attention toward it. Just for now, you can love each sensation, thought, feeling, or desire that appears within you.

As you get the hang of this, you can just allow your awareness to move naturally to whatever it touches next, either inside or outside of you. Whatever it lands on, give it love and acceptance. Just for a moment, let it be the way it is.

What is it like to give simple awareness and love over and over to things that appear in your experience? How open and full does your Heart feel when you are able to give love in this way? If you come to something that's difficult to love or accept, just notice that it's difficult, and then love that it's difficult right now. You can even take a moment to simply love the way some things are harder to love than others. Then move on to whatever is in awareness next.

Just go ahead and love whatever is in front of you, and in that way be filled with love. It's that simple, if you remember that the essence of love is awareness and space. The ideal lover is someone who gives you lots of space to just be yourself but still connects with you as you are. Awareness is like that. It doesn't limit the object of its awareness, but it makes contact.

YOU CAN'T RUN OUT OF LOVE

You can give this awareness or love freely because awareness is the one thing you can never run out of. No matter how many things you've been aware of today, you still have awareness left for this moment and the next. Awareness is easy to give, and it doesn't cost anything or deplete you in any way. In your Heart, there is a limitless supply of love. Just see if you can give so much attention to something that you end up with no more awareness.

We sometimes withhold love and awareness because we think that true love requires more than this simple, open attention. Our conditioning suggests that love requires things like compromise, sacrifice, and unconditional giving of our time and effort. Perhaps some of these are necessary for a relationship, but not for love.

This is an important distinction, as we often confuse love and relationship. We mistakenly believe that love is dependent on relationship. But if we recognize that the source of love is within us, then relationship can be seen in perspective. Relationships are important, but they aren't as important as love. The experience of this inner flow of love is satisfying, either with or without a relationship. You can experience it with a beautiful object of art in a museum, a moving piece of music, an exciting moment in a sporting activity, or in a deep connection with another person. Love is what makes relationships and everything else worthwhile.

What a rich possibility—that all the love you have ever wanted is available right now, just by giving it to everything you encounter, both within you and in the environment. Love is for giving, not for getting. And the more you give, the more fully it fills your Heart to overflowing.

*I may think I feel love
but it is love that feels me
constantly testing the woven fibers
that enclose and protect my heart
with a searing flame
that allows no illusion of separation*

*and as the insubstantial fabric of my inner fortress
is peeled away by the persistent fire
I desperately try to save some charred remains
by escaping into one more dream of passion
I may think I can find love
but it is love that finds me*

*meanwhile, love becomes patient and lies in wait
its undying embers gently glowing
and even if I now turn and grasp after the source of warmth
I end up cold and empty-handed
I may think I can possess love
but it is love that possesses me*

*and finally, I am consumed
for love has flared into an engulfing blaze
that takes everything
and gives nothing in return
I may think love destroys me
but it is love that sets me free*

The above is an excerpt from the book, *Living from the Heart* by Advaita spiritual teacher, Nirmala. Use the following links to further sample or purchase this book:



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